



June 21, 2002

The Honorable E. Clay Shaw
The Honorable Robert T. Matsui
House Subcommittee on Social Security
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Shaw and Representative Matsui:

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Task Forces on Social Security and Work Incentives Implementation, we applaud your work in introducing H.R. 4070, the Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002 and making improvements during markup in the Subcommittee on Social Security. We appreciated your willingness to work with us on this bill and to consider the concerns of beneficiaries while crafting its provisions and amendments.

H.R. 4070 would make important improvements in the representative payment system, extend the voluntary attorneys fees payment system to the Supplemental Security Income program, and make important technical improvements in the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act.

Of particular importance are those provisions that provide additional protections for people whose benefits are handled by representative payees, including allowing re-issuance of benefits in certain cases, establishing additional oversight, and requiring SSA to send an annual report to Congress regarding general oversight of the representative payment process.

In another critical provision, the Social Security Administration would be required, for the first time, to provide a written receipt to the beneficiary whenever a change in earnings or work status is reported. New civil monetary penalties in the bill would not be effective until the system for issuing receipts was in place. The issuance of receipts of earnings reports could go a long way toward removing remaining barriers to work for people with disabilities.

For the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, we are pleased to see included in H.R. 4070 provisions allowing benefits planning, assistance and outreach service providers and protection and advocacy agencies to serve eligible beneficiaries not receiving cash benefits. We applaud the Subcommittee for correcting an error which prevented beneficiaries in this "non-cash" status from receiving these services. In addition, the bill makes an important correction which allows the protection and advocacy agencies to support people with disabilities to remain in the workforce. We also applaud the Subcommittee for allowing employers to

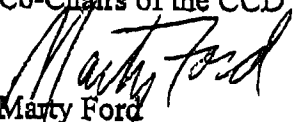
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qualify for a work opportunity tax credit when they hire beneficiaries referred by employment networks. By adding employment networks along with state vocational rehabilitation agencies, the authors have reinforced the spirit of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act.

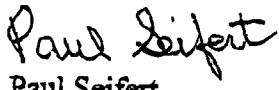
Finally, H.R. 4070 would extend the direct payment of attorneys fees in SSI cases on a voluntary basis. Advocates believe that such a program will make legal representation more accessible for people with disabilities who need assistance in handling their cases as they move through the extremely complex disability determination and appeals systems.

Again, we appreciate your work in bringing this bill to fruition and for addressing the concerns raised by the disability community. We look forward to continued work with you as the Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002 goes through the legislative process toward final enactment.


Sincerely,
Co-Chairs of the CCD Task Forces on Social Security and Work Incentives Implementation

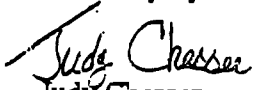

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